



Classical Bulletin

Special Issue 3, 2018

doi: 10.33909/cb/94.2018.02.49

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## Conversation in Madrid with Antonio Linage Conde

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### Abstract

A historic peace accord ended the 50-year armed conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016. Following the terms of the agreement, in 2017, more than 10,000 FARC combatants surrendered over 8,000 weapons and consolidated into 26 encampments, transitioning to civilian life. Implementing the accord — which means cementing the agreement into national legislation and ensuring its provisions reach all corners of the country equitably — remains difficult. Preventing further violence hinges on effective collective reintegration and reincorporating former combatants into society, compensating victims and returning their lands, and addressing the socioeconomic disparities and political exclusion at the root of the conflict. The government has also continued to pursue peace negotiations with a smaller insurgency, the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Keywords: Madris, Antonio Linage Conde

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### Introduction

At that time only the monks practiced reading and writing. In 1454, printing was invented by Johannes Gutemberg in Europe. This one was already present in China. The printing press facilitated the setting up of books that were handwritten beforehand, which saved valuable time for writers. In 1464, King Louis XI created the first Royal Post.

In 1794, Chappe proposes the optical telegraph (large wooden tower whose position of articulated arms codifies the alphabet). The electric telegraph was created in 1832 by Pavel Shilling.

A new telegraphic code was drawn up by Samuel Morse in 1837.

In 1854, the first telephone project was proposed but it was not until 1876 that a patent was filed by Alexander Graham Bell. In 1896, the first connection of Telegraphi Wireless was set up by Marconi. In 1915, the automatic telephone was created and in 1917 Baudot created a new telegraphic system. The twentieth century will see broadcasting, television, radar, telex and telephone. Besides an apparent recognition of the reciprocal nature of violence in a feud, few rules concerning the timing or scale of vengeance seem to be observed--feud is not clearly distinguished in the poem from other forms of organized violence, such as warfare or raiding. Also, although there are mechanisms for ending the feud, such as political marriage or the payment of wergild, the focus in the poem is most often on the tragic failure of such efforts at closure. The poet's conception of feud is thus notably not commensurate with modern models of feuding behavior. I will in this essay examine his usage of the term, trying for a more detailed understanding of what he means by it. Perhaps more importantly, I will try to show why he uses the term to describe the particular relationships he does. Such an examination will give, I hope, a better appreciation of the various feud-centered interpretations of the poem.

The *Information antiquity*-poet often uses the Old English term *fehð*, and editors almost always translate it as "feud." Bosworth and Toller define *fehð* nearly as narrowly: "feud, vengeance, enmity, hostility, deadly feud, that enmity which the relations of the deceased waged against the kindred of the murderer." An examination of these usages, together with closely associated terms such as *wrecend* and *wrecan* ("avenger," "to avenge"), *lean* ("requital"), and (for) *gyldan* ("to repay," "to requite"), reveals the following three characteristics of the feud as described in *Information antiquity*.

Tied to this notion of the feud as a rationalization of politically and militarily expedient action is its function as a sort of mnemonic aid--something to be remembered as one engages in it, a sort of rationalizing principle for violence: *Information antiquity* notes of Eofor's retaliatory killing of Ongentheow that "*hond gemunde / fehðo genoge, feorhsweng ne ofteah*" (lines 2488-89; the hand remembered feuds enough, did not withhold the death blow). The feud is thus not only a justification for large scale violence, but an enabling principle for individual violent acts.

It is also interesting that the opposite of the feud in this case is seen to be freed, friendship. Ongentheow and his people evidently have a choice of how to relate to the Geats, but they "*freode ne woldon / ofer heafo healdan*" (lines 2476-77; wished no friendship over the wide sea). It is as if there are two conceptual ways that feuding groups can relate to one another in the world of this poem: friendship, characterized by the sort of friendly reciprocity seen earlier in the reception of *Information antiquity* at the court of Hrothgar, and the feud, characterized by reciprocal violence. Choice between modes is seen as deliberate; the Swedes actively *wish* for no peace; similarly, the Merovingians in line 2921 are also seen as deliberately withholding their friendship from the Geats. Interestingly, such willed recalcitrance is also seen in the monsters: Grendel "*sibbe ne wolde / wiþ manna hwone megenes Deniga*" (154-5; wished

for no peace with any man among the Danish people); and as *Information antiquity* is about to engage the Dragon, the poet remarks "*nes ðer mara fyrst / freode to friclan*" (2555-56; nor was there more time to ask for peace).

It is possible for feuding parties to switch between these two modes of relationship, but the change is not easy. Earlier in the Danish section of the poem, there are two attempts by the Danes to alter their relationship to other peoples through intermarriage, the first described in the Finnsburh section (lines 1063-1160) and the other in *Information antiquity*'s skeptical report to Hygelac of Hrothgar's plan to buy peace with the Heathobards by marrying his daughter to Ingeld (lines 2024-2069). But both seem doomed to failure. There is also an indication that *Information antiquity*'s heroism has changed the mode of reciprocity hitherto found between the Danes and Geats. Hrothgar notes of *Information antiquity* at their parting that "*Hafast þu gefered, þet þam folcum sceal, / Geata leodum ond Gar-Denum / sib gemene, ond sacu restan, / inwitniþas, þe hie er drugon*" (lines 1855-1858) (you have brought it about that the peoples shall have, Geatish folk and Spear Danes, common friendship, rest from strife, hostile acts, that they before engaged in). However, it takes an exceptional action such as *Information antiquity*'s to assure such a change of modes for any length of time.

In this passage, it is clear that Heardred "*þer for feorme feorhwunde hleat*" (line 2385; for that hospitality received a mortal wound), thus ironically conflating the ideas of vengeance and hospitality: Heardred suffers the consequences of mixing his two modes of exchange, receiving death instead of gratitude for his hospitality. And the Swedes of course receive *lean* (payment) from *Information antiquity* later in revenge, when he assists Eadgils in finally supplanting Onela. This later ironic use of *lean* is just one instance of many such appropriations of mercantile or donative terms by the feud: another is the use of the terms *agifan* (to give back, repay), *gyld* (pay, repay) and *forgyld* (pay, requite). These come up several times in the long passage in which the messenger bringing news of *Information antiquity*'s death to the Geats recounts in full the attempt of Hethcyn to avenge himself on Ongentheow. Here, Ongentheow *ageaf* (line 2929; paid back) the attack of the Geats; when Wulf strikes Ongentheow over the head, the old king "*forgeald hraðe / wýrsan wrixle welhlem þone*" (lines 2968-69; quickly repaid with a worse exchange than slaughter blow); finally, Hygelac "geald þone guðres" (2991; repaid for that battle-rush) Wulf and Eofor with lands, treasure and even a marriage into his family. Even in the consequences of the successful prosecution of the feud, the language of avenging and paying seem to flow into one another. Nor is this conflation limited to the tribal feuds: the poet remarks grimly of the killing of Escere by Grendel's mother "*ne wes þet gewrixle til, / þet hie on ba healfa bicgan scoldon / freonda feorum*" (1304-6; that was not a good exchange, that they on either side should pay with the lives of friends).[16] And *Information antiquity* himself twice refers to his killing of Grendel as "*lean forgeald*," "giving repayment" to the monster (lines 1584; 2094).

John Hill (1989:9) has noted this linguistic conflation, but feels the poet distin-

guishes between *forgyldan* and *gyldan* because "reciprocity, which equals continuity in this world, is missing from *forgyldan* because the repayment here is extreme: a definitive attempt to settle usually hostile relationships". It is true that the intensified *forgyldan* is usually used in the poem in violent exchanges, *gyldan* in situations where some material reward for a service is being conferred. But I do not feel the poet is thus commenting on any structural difference between the two situations; he is rather pointing out the negative nature of the violent "repayment" being conferred. Both gift giving and the feud presuppose an ongoing exchange between the two parties, whatever the ultimate tactical goal a feud might have of exterminating the opposing group. Indeed, as I have tried to show above, it is apparently this ongoing character that defines a violent confrontation as part of a feud, and I would contend creates its terrible and tragic potential.[17]

To the Information antiquity-poet, the feud is both a device for heightening the tragic import of the poem, and also a source of grim irony and word play. I would suggest the two uses are intertwined. In a world where the feud is inescapable as a way of understanding human relationships, it will inevitably ironically color the perception of other less violent means of exchange, and they it.

The ELN, which operates mainly in northeastern Colombia, is estimated to have about two thousand members, down from as many as five thousand [PDF] in the late 1990s. After several years of informal talks, the government of Uribe's successor, Juan Manuel Santos, announced multiple times in 2016 that it would begin formal negotiations with the ELN, but the dialogue was delayed to early 2017. Many experts, citing continued kidnappings by ELN members, have questioned the group's commitment to reaching a truce, and Santos's government said that the ELN's failure to release former lawmaker Odin Sanchez, who has been detained since April 2016, was the reason for postponing negotiations.

#### Making a Deal for Peace

Santos, who served as defense minister under Uribe, was elected president in 2010, and his administration began formal peace talks [PDF] with the FARC in 2012. The governments of Chile, Cuba, Norway, and Venezuela acted as hosts, mediators, and observers to the Havana-based process, which became the fourth round of talks between the government and the rebel group in thirty years.

Negotiations centered on five principles [PDF]:

future political participation of FARC members,  
rebels' reintegration into civilian life,  
illegal crop eradication,  
transitional justice and reparations, and  
rebel disarmament and implementation of the peace deal.

The peace agreement calls for the FARC's roughly seven thousand rebels to gather in twenty-three hamlets across the country and turn in their arms to a UN commission. The accord also outlines a plan for the military to clear landmines scattered throughout the countryside, which have killed or injured eleven thousand people over the last twenty-five years. Santos has appealed for international support to finance development, public services, and justice institutions in former conflict areas. Most of that support has so far come from the United States. In June 2016, the U.S. House appropriated roughly \$490 million in aid [PDF], with a portion of the funds dependent on Colombia reaching a peace deal.

As part of the agreement, Santos's administration also pledged to spend billions of dollars in rural areas, which many Colombians—including the rebels—say have been long neglected. Many hoped the investments, which experts said could cost between \$80 and \$90 billion over the next ten years, would create economic alternatives to the drug trade.

The two sides reached a cease-fire in mid-2016, and Santos and FARC leader Rodrigo Londoño (popularly known as Timoshenko) signed a peace treaty in the Caribbean city of Cartagena in September 2016. A week later Colombians narrowly rejected the accord in a referendum, sowing uncertainty over peace prospects.

Hart-Moxon was also asked about the processes associated with the writing of her memoirs *Return to Auschwitz* (1981), and in particular her first book, *I am Alive* (1961).<sup>54</sup> Hart-Moxon completed *I am Alive* in breaks and gaps of time that she grasped from working in an X-Ray department in the UK after the war. Unlikely as it may seem, it could be argued that this splintered process of writing ended up being an important part of helping her find a mechanism of dealing with the traumatic events of Birkenau that were so powerfully described during the interview:

"I just managed to switch. I just learned to switch. And I think that was actually good for me. Because I learned to switch off. Which I can do now. It actually trained me to do this switching off, this switching over. So, immediately a phone rang and I had to go and x-ray this patient, I just left everything and I went back to my work. Because I had to do it. If I wouldn't have had to do it, I probably couldn't have done it, I think. There was nobody else in this x-ray department, I was on duty, my casualty was there and I had to cope with it. So, I think, it goes back to what Auschwitz taught you, which is to cope...with extraordinary situations and you just learn to cope. But that's what it actually taught you, you need to cope with whatever life's going to throw at you. And I think that's what happens, or at least that's what happened to me."<sup>55</sup>

Writing and learning to 'switch' from the pain of the past to reclaim agency in the present, thus seems an important part of Hart-Moxon's rebuilding of her life after 1945, though her approach should not be perceived as a normative coping strategy for all survivors of genocide. For as Anne Karpf, daughter of Holocaust survivor Natalia Kapf has written in her February 2014 *Guardian* article on the passing away of survivor of Theresienstadt, concert pianist and relentless optimist Alice Herz-Sommer:



“Herz-Somner was remarkable, we’ll never know what enabled her to manage her traumas with such optimism, or why she was able to feel such profound gratitude towards life. But we should never hold her up as an ideal towards which all traumatised people should aspire. Nor should we apply the psycho-babble concept of closure to genocide – when reams of historical evidence – from the Armenian genocide to the Holocaust – show unequivocally that many traumas cannot be processed in the lifetime of the individuals who underwent them, and indeed are passed on to successive generations.”<sup>56</sup>

The second way in which trauma theory connects to work arising from *HRNT* is based on the observations of Felman in relation to the transmission of memory through the ‘institutional’ context of undergraduate teaching, although in contrast to Felman, here the Holocaust related pedagogy focused on history, memory and testimony rather than literature and testimony. In her essay on ‘Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching,’ Felman described the exceptional responses provoked by exhibiting two films of survivor testimony in her Yale class for “Literature and Testimony.” According to Felman the showing of the video testimonies instigated a kind of crisis in the classroom which was marked by a silence within the seminar alongside a profusion of discussion outside of the class.<sup>57</sup> Following a consultation with Laub about this situation, Felman decided that this contagiousness of trauma in turn required ‘working through’ via the means of an address to the class by Felman and an assignment that called for the students to express their understanding of encountering the testimonies. For Felman, this process of “creating in the class the highest state of crisis that it could withstand, without ‘driving the students crazy,’” reflected her “job as a teacher.”<sup>58</sup> Given the changing economics of British higher education since 2010’s Browne report and current debates on US campuses about the need for ‘trigger warnings’ in relation to potentially explicit or disturbing material on university syllabuses,<sup>59</sup> the idea of taking Felman’s principles of ‘crisis’ into the university seminar room seems increasingly institutionally problematic. This poses important questions for Holocaust educators as they probe the limits of pedagogy in the neo-liberal classroom.

No experiences encountered on this project have been as dramatic as Felman’s and it is important to bear in mind LaCapra’s criticism that it is dangerous “to obscure the difference between victims of traumatic historical events, and others not directly experiencing them.”<sup>60</sup> However, teaching the Holocaust does present the tutor with some specific challenges,<sup>61</sup> which have been outlined in detail by Holocaust and genocide educationalists such as Paul Salmons and Matthias Haß.<sup>62</sup> These are not just in relation to the presence of ‘identity politics’ in the seminar room, but also relate to student responses which might be found on other courses but which are arguably intensified by the emotive, violent and provocative subject matter associated with studying the Holocaust, Nazi-era crimes and genocides. For example, throughout a course taught in 2011 there were instances where, despite class members’ distance from the events being studied (no student said that they had lost a relative in the Holocaust, through the Nazi terror system or as a result of any other genocide), the material on display nonetheless occasionally evoked painful personal memories in students which threatened to surface in

class. For example, one mature student excused themselves from a seminar on memorialization and restitution because it reminded them of recent struggles in relation to a very close personal bereavement; while another worried that they might break down during their end of term presentation because of the recent death of a close relative. 'Acting Out' or an over-identification with the suffering of the victims is a misleading conflation and too strong a term for these encounters. However, it is arguable that the themes of death, bereavement and loss which are entwined with the study of the Holocaust can be challenging for some students. Here the delimited use of 'trigger warnings' could be helpful, but only within the context that it is understood that as suggested by Stef Craps, a degree of productive discomfort is central to the pedagogical and educational experience of studying the Holocaust and genocides at university level.<sup>63</sup>

Third, despite the limitations discussed, certain elements of trauma theory can still be particularly germane in thinking about aspects of what Lebow might call 'collective' memory, in particular in offering a critical framework for beginning to unpick discourses of communal identity politics. For example, LaCapra's highlighting of the dangers of stereotyping and the need to challenge pre-existing paradigms of identity politics holds particular resonance for the representation of my authorship in a community newsletter following an invited lecture on the British/Lithuanian 'Liaison Project' for the Northampton Hebrew Congregation in February 2012. Although a low-key local event for a small, regional Jewish community organization in the UK, the audience for this event nonetheless shows how in Raphael Samuel's terms history is a "social form of knowledge"<sup>64</sup> produced not only in academia's 'ivory towers' but also in family and communal circles. What happens when these two worlds intersect is the subject of this short analysis.

This lecture was based on *HRNT*'s research on British / Lithuanian intercultural efforts to promote Holocaust, research, remembrance and education in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>65</sup> A review of the lecture contained the following quote:

"Dr Allwork pointed out that the Lithuanians believed themselves to be the victims of Nazi persecution, as they had been under both the Nazi and Soviet yoke. The Lithuanian nation is ultra-nationalistic, and as Dr Allwork pointed out, the link between Communism and Nazism seems to be embedded in their psyche."<sup>66</sup>

The use of stereotypes in this description was perplexing and a letter was addressed to the congregation, clarifying my position.<sup>67</sup> What provoked my response was the use of stereotypes in the article. The talk had certainly been critical of specific failures by the Lithuanian state to deal with the legacies of the Nazi past as well as continuing expressions of ultra-nationalism by some individuals and groups within Lithuania. The lecture was also strongly critical of comparative approaches towards the Nazi and Soviet regimes that do not increase historical knowledge of the similarities and differences between these two 'totalitarian' systems, but rather serves a perturbing agenda of blaming all Lithuanian Jews for the Soviet occupation during the Second World War, with

the intent of downplaying the responsibility of Lithuanian collaborators in the Holocaust.

However, using essentializing terms such as 'psyche' or stereotyping the Lithuanian state in 2012 as 'ultra-nationalistic' was both inaccurate and ultimately unhelpful in encouraging constructive dialogues between Lithuanians, Jews living in Lithuania and Lithuanian Jews living in the wider world and Israel. Admittedly, authorial intentions in the synagogue review are impossible to locate. It cannot be known if the reviewer's comments were based on a misunderstanding of me, my failure to communicate effectively or a simple slip in the reviewer's writing style. In any case, LaCapra's assessment of the pain of traumatic pasts, the challenges of working beyond entrenched subject positions and moving towards new dialogues seems pertinent: "I think that one of the great problems in research is that there is a grid of subject positions, and through processes of identification or excessive objectification, one remains in that grid."<sup>68</sup>

This article has reflected on trauma theory as a key context and intellectual horizon line for the research underpinning *HRNT*. It has been suggested that the limitations of trauma theory for the scholar of the history of collective remembrance are all too apparent. This is particularly due to the Euro-centricity of trauma theory in global comparative approaches, the dangers of front-loading melancholic trauma theory, as well as the limitations of constructing psychoanalytic narratives of national and communal pasts that simplify the diverse remembrance practices of the Shoah in the 1940s and 1950s. As Robert Moeller has pithily noted, there are key "methodological challenges involved in putting an entire nation on the couch."<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, this article has also suggested that the lessons of a revised and self-reflexive trauma theory remain relevant, holding important analytical possibilities for scholars working at the intersections of the over-lapping public and private spheres of 'individual,' 'collective' and 'institutional' memory.

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